DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 040 831 RE 002 852

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TITLE Updating the Language Experience Approach.
PUB DATE 7 May 70
NOTE 5p.; Paper presented at the International Reading Association conference, Anaheim, California, May 6-9, 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.35
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Reading, Individualized Instruction, Instructional Innovation, *Instructional Materials, Language Development, *Language Experience Approach, Language Handicaps, Language Patterns, Language Skills, Reading Materials, Reading Programs

ABSTRACT

Three recent developments discussed were representative of some of the modern trends in the language-experience approach. The first stressed the increased use of multisensory materials which have expanded the chances for success of many language-limited children. The second trend focused on the extended use of learning centers to provide them with a place for personalized learning. The third trend emphasized new teaching materials for a language-experience approach focusing on the development of language of high content. References are included. (CL)

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Session: Thursday, May 7, 2:15-3:15 p.m.
Magnolia A and B, Disneyland Hotel

Language Experience Approach

"Updating the Language Experience Approach"

In learning environments which utilize a language experience approach, each child conceptualizes:

What I can think about, I can talk about.
What I can say, I can write, or someone can write for me.
I can read what I can write by myself.
I can learn to read what other people write for me to read, because most of the words we use are the same.

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This simple formula is useful in identifying an approach in reading instruction which--

- places high value on the ideas and language of children;
- accepts children's language, regardless of how divergent from standard English;
- reflects the real language of children in materials produced in the classroom, including dialects;
- extends children's ideas beyond the classroom through the publication of individual and class books, magazines, newspapers, paintings, music compositions, photographs, and other ways that human beings communicate their ideas and feelings;
- evaluates progress more on abilities to produce ideas with personal language than on abilities to repeat the language of other people.

At past sessions of the International Reading Association a language experience approach has been explained, research reports relating to its relative success as an approach for teaching reading have been reviewed, and "how it works" has been extended. Today we are to think together briefly about some of the recent developments. Three have been selected as representative.

1. <u>An increase in the use of multi-sensory materials has increased the chances for success to many language-limited children</u>.

Books without words and motion pictures without words are being made available in ever increasing numbers. These materials which invite divergent language responses utilize the real language and the real background which children bring to school. They provide a common base from which children can launch new language skills and abilities. Children are not forced to compete with the language patterns of people they have never seen or heard.

The sound motion pictures without words are the most exciting new materials. They offer children a clear, creative field of language responses. Sound, color, motion, feeling, and magic motivate all to participate. Participation breeds success. Success breeds confidence, and confidence breeds the need to know a variety of ways of using language--including writing and reading the language.

The new films produced specifically for a language experience approach are brief (3-7 minutes): open-ended (children talk and write beyond the film rather than repeat it): universally appealing (every child has a chance to wish and pretend): and <u>without words</u>.

2. Extended use of learning centers provides time and place for personalized learning.

More and more teachers using a language experience approach organize their classrooms as language laboratories. These laboratories continue throughout the school day and provide a place for children to work independently and in small groups without direct supervision by the teacher. Choices are plentiful and available. Time for individual conferences with the teacher are abundant.

These laboratories provide a balance between non-reading language centers and reading and writing centers. There is more emphasis on talking and listening than has been characteristic of reading programs. The discussion center, the art center, the listening and viewing center, the puppet center, and others provide places for children to use their own ideas and own language and to come in contact with the language and ideas of others without having to read and write.

In the same learning environment children will find a writing center, a reading center, a linguistic study center, and game center, and others which require skills in encoding and decoding the language.

The wide variety of materials available to children assures a level of success to all. The emphasis on reading is natural and normal. It takes its place in communication skill development along with speaking, listening, and writing.

3. New teacher materials for a language experience approach focus on the development of language of high content.

A review of the new materials will reveal:

- a major thrust toward developing oral and written language in meaningful context that will extend vocabularies in the form classes and apply them in many ways:

  Nouns--the language of names
  Verbs--the language of movement
  Adjectives and adverbs--the language of description
  Variety of sentence patterns--the language of human beings:

- a trust implied that by using the full language of a group of children, the structure groups of words will fall into place naturally;

- language presented in many forms--talking, discussing, visiting, storytelling, listening to literary selections, making word lists, playing games, pantomime, dramatization, role-playing, and naming things;

- children increasing their language power through many avenues and a multitude of influences;

- an emphasis on retaining the language personality of each child at the same time that he is learning the common elements of English;

- a design which permits each child to build language strength:

  # through the use of his own language (English or another or a combination);
  # through developing understandings of the nature of the English language;
  # through experiences of relating his own language to that of many other people;

- language experiences to be developed are stated in behavioral terms so that teaching is diagnostic and evaluation is natural and continuous;

- home influences on language are recognized and parent participation is planned as a regular feature through the use of materials designed especially for them.

A good learning environment for language development will never produce failure. Feelings and facts balance each other. Convergent thinking is balanced with divergent thinking. The needs of slow learners are balanced with the needs of fast learners. Language becomes a true reflection of each beautiful child.

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